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Rural Appalachian communities are being forced to reorganize by economic pressures and higher level-of-living standards which have been impressed primarily through the mass media. Outmigration and disorganization have emerged as the means of response by these communities to imposed societal pressure. Ideally, social adjustment in rural Southern Appalachian areas could best be achieved through availability of employment within the rural community or through relocation of rural inhabitants to areas of improved job availability. Integration of rural Appalachian poverty-stricken communities into the larger society will be delayed until expectations concerning minimum acceptable income and standard of living are met. (DA)

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changes in the rural southern appalachian community

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PREFACE

West Virginia University's Appalachian Center is dedicated to the objective of bringing knowledge needed for effective decision-making to those who plan and work for the betterment of the State and the Appalachian Region of which this State is a part. The need for knowledge is great—especially the concentration of knowledge in the social and physicial sciences. Moreover, the needed information spans a number of methodologies for its generation—known principles must be collected and applied, and in other instances, use must be made of empirical investigations.

The most important function of the Appalachian Center's Office of Research and Development is to produce the type of knowledge that is vital for rational social and economic decisions with respect to its value for leadership audiences in the State and the Region, and the Center's staff of programmers and field educators located on the University's Campus and throughout West Virginia's counties. The Office of Research and Development, in fulfillment of this purpose, supports a variety of research conducted both by its own staff and other components of West Virginia University.

This paper is an attempt to present an analysis of the environment which surrounds the social and ecomomic problems which West Virginia must confront. Stated in another way, the paper is a statement of more general problems which must be considered and solved by the State's decision and policy makers if West Virginia's progress is to be assured.

This paper is a revision, and an improvement on a previous paper entitled "Rural Southern Appalachia and Mass Society" prepared by the same author. In contrast to that paper, this concentrates on the rural areas instead of the Appalachian Region as a whole.

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CHANGE IN THE RURAL SOUTHERN APPALACHIAN COMMUNITY

by

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Change in the Rural Southern Appalachian Community

by

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The two important factors which determined the identity of the early rural Southern Appalachian community were (1) the homogeneity and, in turn, the beliefs and value orientation of the early settlers,[1] and (2) the type of interaction patterns initiated by the physical makeup and the isolation of the region. As a consequence, values such as individualism, traditionalism, fatalism, religious fundamentalism, and life in harmony with nature, have occupied a higher rank in the hierarchy of the value orientation of the rural Appalachians than in the value orientation of those living in urban centers and those outside the Region.[2] Oppositely, values such as achievement, as defined by the American culture, and materialism ranked higher among persons outside the rural segment of the Region.

Because values are predispositions to action and are criteria for making choices in life, interaction patterns among members of the Appalachian society were in line with these values. Consequently, the rural Southern Appalachian community was relatively integrated, and its integration was based on these values. Also because of limited contact with the outside, at least in the past, an individual born in the rural Southern Appalachian community developed a personality which was in accordance with the social structure of the rural community and, in turn, the Region. Reference groups outside the local community which could change some aspects of the orientation of these people frequently did not exist. For instance, neither one's income nor the facilities in one's house were compared with those of persons of similar status[3] outside the community, and less so, with persons outside the Region. Comparisons, in other words, were made only with those within the Region and especially with those within the community and the neighborhood. Therefore, at least until the time when more of the influence of the mass society was felt, the culture system was in accordance with the personality and the social systems. The perception and evaluation of one's position in the social system were determined primar-

ily on the basis of the local culture rather than on the basis of the culture of the larger American society.

In general, the relationships among the various social or cultural sub-systems within the Region (such as the relationship between a rural and an urban community) or the relationship between the entire mass society and the rural community, comprised a partial but relatively stable equilibrium. This equilibrium which developed was not general but it included systematic linkage of certain dimensions of the culture and the social sysetm. In terms of other dimensions a state of accommodation existed. Because of this accommodation and the equilibrium condition, occupants of similar or higher social positions outside of the Region were used infrequently as points of reference by those inside. Outsiders, on the other hand, were neither concerned with, nor did they expect the Southern Appalachian sub-system to keep up with them.

THE PROCESS OF INCORPORATION OF THE RURAL APPALACHIAN COMMUNITY INTO THE MASS SOCIETY

In recent years some drastic changes have occurred, producing the result that the state of accommodation between the rural community in Southern Appalachia and the larger American society has become disrupted. Through mass media, primarily television, people in the Region, in rural areas in particular, have become increasingly aware of the style of life and value orientation of the larger society. Improved transportation, on the other hand, has brought them into closer contact and, in turn, has brought more interaction with the outside. Migration to urban centers where employment has become available has also produced interaction and communication with the outside.[4] Some migrants frequently return to their communities in Southern Appalachia, while relatives visit those who remain in the urban setting.[5]

From a theoretical point of view, communication and interaction with the outside constitute the two most crucial processes in the building of new social systems. Through increased communication with the outside, members of the Appalachian society became increasingly aware of the mass society's culture, its social structure, and the value orientation on which culture and social structure are built. In particular, rural Appalachians became more cognizant of the level of living and the income of the more visible urban middle class. In all probability this is because the urban middle class is more visible than other strata since the content of most mass media ad-

vertising is based on the interests of this group. Moreover the standards of this group, located between two extremes, are achieveable for most Americans. Therefore, when compared with the rural segment, the urban middle class constitutes the prestigeful stratum of society, and due to the visibility of its values and style of life, it becomes a potential reference group for the rural resident. Furthermore, visibility of the urban society coupled with increased interaction facilitates the development of a single societal system which is tending to absorb rural communities and neighborhoods. In other words, the rural community is becoming more and more a part of the structure of the larger society, and, therefore, it is responding more and more to its pressures. In addition, because the rural community uses it as a reference group, it responds to many of the larger society's expectations voluntarily.

What is happening to the rural communities in the Appalachian Region in terms of their adjustment to the urban society, in general, also is happening to the urban communities of the Region in terms of their adjustment to the urban centers of the larger American society. The urban process of adjustment, however, is different in certain respects. First, since they are closer in certain aspects, urban social classes in Appalachia can adjust more easily to the corresponding social classes of the larger urban society. Second, the potential for urban adjustment is larger and its rate is faster due to the fact that urbanites in the Region are more educated, travel more, and use more mass media. These differences in adjustment and the reasons for it also hold true for the differences existing among social classes; the higher the social class, the faster its adjustment to the corresponding class outside the Region.

In general, the integration of the various Regional communities into the larger society does not occur at a uniform rate. Among other dimensions, it is positively related to the size of the community and the socioeconomic status of its members. As will be indicated below, the differences in the rates of integration of various communities, and of parts of communities, serve as mechanisms facilitating the integration of slower changing communities or parts by exerting pressure on them. Of more importance, however, is that differences in rates of integration are found not only in communities or their parts, but also among the basic components of the community: the social system, the cultural system, and the personality system.

Differential rates of change of the basic components are more

important not because they lead to further change, but because they lead to further disorganization. Certain aspects of the community and of the personality systems of its members are changing and becoming integrated into the larger American culture faster than others. These differential rates of change are important to the parts of each of these basic components. But they are more important for the relationships among them. More specifically, it appears that cultural integration at least in certain important dimensions, occurs faster than the integration of the social system and probably much faster than integration of important aspects of the personality system. The latter form of integration refers to the development of personalities compatible with the larger society and with changes occurring within the culture and the social systems of the community. For instance, the acceptance of certain cultural items, such as home appliances, or cultural values, such as economic achievment, is faster than acceptance of change of certain social dimensions such as community or family norms which specify that husbands should help at home when wives are employed. In a familiar fashion, certain social dimensions, such as acceptance of the urban criteria for determining status (for example, the ascription of higher status to women who are employed), become incorporated more readily into the social system compared to the necessary development of the personalities of those involved. The latter refers to the need for development of personalities which both consciously or unconsciously can and will accept the new form as the right form of behavior .

In summary, due to a decreased isolation and to increased interaction and communication with the outside, the rural Southern Appalachian community is in the process of losing its semi-autonomy and is becoming increasingly a part of the larger American society. However, because changes in communication and transportation influence in differing degrees the various types of communities, the various parts of them, and the relationship among the social, cultural, and personality systems, the integration of the rural community is not uniform. In the next section, attention is paid to a few examples of ways through which differential rates of integration lead to further change and, to an extent, to further disorganization.

FOLLOW-UP CHANGES

A crucial aspect of societal change today is that rate of change of the culture system is sufficiently rapid so that the social system

and the personality system often do not have the time to adjust to it. Thus, it is more difficult to achieve and retain equilibrium.[6] In many respects this problem is more important for the rural Southern Appalachian community, because it must adjust to the current changes facing the entire country while adjusting to those changes which have already taken place in the rest of the country but not in rural Southern Appalachia.[7] In addition, rural Southern Appalachia does not have resources comparable to those possessed by the rest of the country and, therefore, it does not have flexibility to adjust either to the new changes or to the changes which have already taken place elsewhere.[8]

An often discussed aspect of societal discrepancy of this nature is the disjunction between the lower classes' acceptance of the cultural goal of success, particularly economic success, and the lack of institutionally legitimate social means of attaining this goal. Higher alienation scores exhibited by lower socioeconomic strata of our society are attributed to this disjunction. However, while this seems to be happening to the lower classes in general, it is happening to rural Southern Appalachian communities to a larger extent. Although rural Appalachians are taught the value of success by the same mass media as are lower classes elsewhere, they have less opportunity for implementing this value. If this is true, other things being equal, we should expect more frustration and, in turn, more alienation among rural Appalachians than among lower socioeconomic strata of the general population. Lower strata, in turn, are known to be more alienated than middle and upper strata.[9]

A considerable number of rural Southern Appalachians who cannot implement the achievement value migrate to urban centers, primarily those outside of the Region. However, some of these migrants cannot adjust to urban life and return to Southern Appala. They either keep going back and forth, using this as a mode of adjustment, or they return permanently to their home communities. For our purposes, the latter is the most important group because it directly affects the change and stability of the traditional rural community of the Region. A number of those who come and go act as agents of change. They introduce new ideas, familiarize the rest of the rural community with the mass society, and, thus, facilitate the integration of the Region into the larger society. However, those who have more adjustment problems during their stay in the city become more frustrated about modern society. These unfavorable experiences often convince such persons that life in their home

communities was and is better than urban life and that they belong with their group at home. They value, more than before their migration, the Southern Appalachian style of life and their home community. Due to what is called the law of reciprocity,[10] some of the previous migrants become more attached to their community groups, many of which are traditional and adhere to old ways, while others show symptoms of social disorganization and accept neither the norms of the traditional group nor the norms of the mass society. The former contribute to the cohesion of a community social structure which, in many respects, is similar to that of the past. The latter probably contribute more than any other segment of the community's population to the existence of anomie.[11]

In general, the form of the present Southern Appalachian community social organization should, to a considerable extent, be seen as the outcome of the interplay of processes such as these. The same explanation probably would hold for the problems which co-exist with the present type of social organization. In the light of these processes, for example, one can see some of the reasons why certain Appalachians accept welfare payments or remain in poverty.

There are other reasons, however, which are associated with the seeking of welfare and are not direct consequences of community disorganization. One such reason, of course, is what might be called relative deprivation. A number of migrants for instance who return to their communities tend to compare, consciously or unconsciously, the local wages with the considerably higher city wages. As indicated previously, this also could be true for all rural Appalachians who use urban classes as their reference group. They would tend to compare their wages with those of the city, and, as a consequence, feel deprived.[12]

Combining the reasons for dissatisfaction with the local employment situation and the desire of these people to stay in their home communities, it appears that a number of individuals in those communities are predisposed to seek welfare. This predisposition operates as a constant within the functioning of the community or neighborhood social system. Because this constant exists, and because the individual needs the support of the group to justify his behavior, norms suggesting the legitimacy of receiving welfare payments are established.[13] Interestingly, such norms did not exist in the early Appalachian society; welfare was considered charity and was condemned.

The discussion above has been oriented in terms of the change in the isolation of the rural community which, to a large extent, produced voluntary conformity to cultural expectations of the mass society. Next we will be concerned for social pressures exerted by the mass society which affect the individual either directly or indirectly through the social system in which he is involved. Included in this is the pressure mass society is placing on the Regional social system, and, in particular, on the rural community.

As Southern Appalachia becomes incorporated into the larger society, those outside the Region become increasingly conscious of its deviancy. What was previously viewed as the idealistic life of the rural community is now looked upon as a backwardness which should be corrected. The state of accommodation guaranteed by the semi-autonomy of the rural Southern Appalachian community is disappearing and the demand for conformity to the most visible cultural standards of the outside is increasing. Of particular importance is the overall theme of American culture, the value for economic achievement and a higher standard of living. Outside direct pressures for conformity to this standard can be seen in the efforts of the Federal government which, implementing the desires of society, is carrying out programs of directed change. Such pressures also are manifested by the distress Appalachians feel when interacting with those outside the Region. This distress may be felt by actually experiencing the attitudes and reactions of those outside Southern Appalachia or by the relatively inferior self-perceptions of the Region's inhabitants. This type of pressure is not uniformly felt. Some social sub-systems, such as urban communities in the Region and mainly middle and upper strata, are more aware of it than others. The upper and middle classes, for example, using more mass media and interacting more with the outside, are more integrated into the society, use it more as a reference group, and, in turn, are more interested in the opinions of its members. Therefore, the upper and middle classes, mainly from the urban centers of the Region, knowing that they are included in the Appalachian stereotype, attempt to change the stereotype by exerting pressure on the lower classes and rural communities which deviate most from the societal standards. Primarily because of self-preservation, some of the middle class, and especially the upper class, are very critical of rural communities which show visible symptoms of poverty. Had they not sensed their inclusion in the Appalachian stereotype, they would probably be less critical. Often this is also

true with individuals of lesser means who are highly integrated into the larger society.

The agencies of directed change and the more integrated segments of the Region exert demands upon rural communities, primarily those which exhibit characteristics of the Appalachian stereotype, and especially that part of the stereotype which indicates low economic achievement and low level of living.

For those people in the rural community who have the potential for change and are not anomic, these pressures can bring about cultural and social changes, which are, in turn, reflected in the type of social organization of the community, without creating serious discrepancies in the personalities of those involved. However, those who lack the means of attaining the objectives that are suggested by the change agencies and the more incorporated societal segments face further personal disorganization or retreat. The change demanded of these people may have the effect of leading to further retreat, and, thus, reinforcing the preservation of the traditional social and cultural system. These may appear attractive for their offering security apart from the frustrating complex society. On the other hand, they could lead to further personal disorganization and deviance and, thus, reinforce anomie. Then, too, such demands may lead to the use of acceptable but anxiety-reducing mechanisms, such as attachment to strong religious sectarian doctrines.[14] Depending on the previous community structure and the nature of the processes which follow societal pressures, one can encounter in rural Appalachia today communities with strong sectarian tendancies where sexual morality is usually upheld very strictly. But one can also find communities where the moral code is loosely reinforced. In communities like these, illegitimacy rates are usually high.[15]

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

It can be said that rural Southern communities, like most socio-economic systems, are being forced to reorganize so that they can function as integral parts of the larger societal system. This reorganization is initiated through the acceptance of goals which place an increased emphasis on the American cultural theme of economic achievement and a higher level of living. Therefore, economic achievement and a higher level of living constitute the axis around which the rural community is forced to reorganize.[16] Since, however,

the means for responding to this call are limited to these communities, out-migration and disorganization are the usual responses to this societal pressure.

This suggests that an ideal situation for adjustment or smooth integration of the rural Southern Appalachian community into the larger society would be through the availability of employment in rural communities or through relocation of the people in either new or existing communities in the Region where employment would be available. In either case, economic rewards should, in some way, be in line with the expectations of both the community and the outside world. Under such conditions and with the support of the intimate group and the familiarity of the culture, programs of directed change or the impact of mass society itself would be most effective in bringing about change and would create the least discrepancy in the organization of the personality of the participants and, in turn, of their community.[17] Therefore, until expectations—of those in the rural community and of those in the larger society—concerning income and the level of living of rural Appalachians are met, equalibrium and, in turn, relatively complete integration of the rural Appalachian community into the larger society cannot be attained. As elsewhere in rural America, communities which do not offer opportunities for their members to meet these expectations, such as small isolated communities, continue declining. Furthermore, because societal expectations concerning income and level of living increase each year, while the overall resources of small rural Appalachian communities tend to remain the same, the size of rural communities which are able to sustain their population is increasing.[16]

FOOTNOTES

[1]For a popular description of the early Southern Appalachian society written by an insider see Harry M. Caudill, **Night Comes to the Cumberlands,** Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1963.

[2]For specific information on the value orientation of Southern Appalachians see Thomas R. Ford, "Value Orientations of a Culture of Poverty: The Southern Appalachian Case." This paper was presented at the American Home Economics Association Workshop, "Working with Low-Income Families". 1965. For information on Southern Appalachian values supported with empirical data see Thomas R. Ford, editor, "The Passing of Provincialism," **The Southern Appalachian Region: A Survey,** University of Kentucky Press, 1962, pp. 9-34. Also see W. D. Weatherford and Earl D. C. Brewer, **Life and Religion in Southern Appalachia,** New York: Friendship Press, 1962; Jack E. Weller, **Yesterday's People,** University of Kentucky Press, 1965. Leo Fishman, editor, **Poverty Amid Affluence,** Yale University Press, 1966.

[3]Status, in this usage, does not mean economic status, but rather attributes of status, such as, occupation, race, religion, involvement in community activities, and relative rank or position in the community in general.

[4]Along with the availability of employment opportunities in urban centers the decline of the coal mining industry could be mentioned. Decline of subsistance farms is not treated as a reason for decreasing isolation. Rather, it seems to be a consequence of the incorporation of the Region into the larger American society and this, in turn, seems to be responsible for the development of dissatisfaction with farm income. The same could be said about migration which, although it influences isolation (people return, relatives visit them), is also a consequence of the change in isolation which indirectly produces dissatisfaction with local wages.

[5]For data on recent migration in Southern Appalachia, see James S. Brown and George A. Hillery "The Great Migration 1940-1960" in **The Southern Appalachian Region, op. cit.,** pp. 34-78.

[6]Such equilibrium could refer either to the compatibility of the various parts of the social, cultural, and personality systems considered separately, or to the compatibility among these three systems.

[7]This applies not only to Southern Appalachia. Rural communities, in general, face this adjustment problem. This adjustment problem is given as a reason for the higher alienation of small town businessmen as compared to that of those from larger towns. John Photiadis "Social Integration of Businessmen in Various Size Communities": **Social Forces,** Vol. 46, No. 2, December 1967.

[8]The integration of rural commnuities elsewhere has been more gradual and much smoother than that of rural Appalachia. In the Plains, for instance, even before the appearance of the hard surfaced road, communication and interaction with urban centers were easier. In addition, in those areas there was, and still is, room for farms to expand and thus maintain and advance farmers' standards of living. In Southern Appalachia there is neither room for farm expansion nor industry for a part-time job which would supplement low income.

[9]Wendall Bell, "Anomie Social Isolation and the Class Structure" **Sociometry,** 20 (June, 1957), pp. 34-37; Also see Dorothy L. Meier and Wendall Bell, "Anomia and Differential Access to the Achievement of Life Goals, **"American Sociological Review,** 24 (April, 1959), pp. 189-202.

[10]According to this law the more rewards a person receives from the group, the more he obeys its norms. For more information see George Homans, **The Human Group,** Harcourt, Brace and Co., New York, 1950, pp. 284-288.

[11]It is difficult to suggest that because of processes such as this the existence of anomie in the Appalachian Rural Community has increased. Other processes, such as the out-migration of lower socioeconomic strata and of deviant members of the community, probably have had the opposite effect.

[12]The opposite is true with Southern European peasants who have migrated in this country. During the first years after their arrival, they compare themselves with those they left behind and find even the lower wages in this country rewarding.

[13]Part of the predisposition for establishing these norms is due to the initiation of welfare programs by the Federal government during the great depression.

[14]For a relevant discussion see John B. Holt "'Holiness Religion: Cultural Shock and Social Reorganization," **Amercian Sociological Review,** (October, 1940), pp. 7430-147. Also, see Roberto Renato and Thomas O. Dee "Anomie, the Quest for Community and the Formation of Sects Among Puerto Ricans in New York," **American Catholic Social Review,** (Spring, 1960), pp. 18-36.

[15]High rates of illegitimacy are not new in Southern Appalachia in spite of the fact that it appears that they are affected by the new societal changes. It is quite possible that complete isolation could, at least concerning illegitimacy or similar deviations, have the same effects as the impact of rapid change or a complex culture.

[16]This strong pressure for reorganization easily can be traced to the pressures main institutions receive. The economic institution, as compared to other institutions, normally receives more pressures for adustment to the new goals. However, this institution has not been strengthened in areas where agriculture, mining, and forestry, due to particular circumstances, have declined in importance. In many such areas at the present, more emphasis is placed on manufacturing and tourism, along with the building of new highways which will complement the development of both these industries. The pressure on the institution of government can be easily traced to the strong dissatisfaction of Appalachians with government's (mainly state) effectiveness to move the state closer to national standards. Similar, and probably stronger, dissatisfaction exists with the institution of education which again is seen as a means of securing better occupational opportunities for children.

[17]A book by Professor Sasaki discusses impressive changes which occurred in the Indian reservation when the El Paso Natural Gas Company built a pipeline through the reservation, thus, offering ample employment inside the reservation. Tom Sasaki, **Fruitland, New Mexico: A Navaho Community in Transition,** Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1960.

[18]This process is affected by a number of other processes, such as, the mechanization in mining and farming, and the increase of employment opportunities in the city.